(b) to (d) As per information compiled on the basis of representations received from the family members of the missing defence personnel including representations from Missing Defence Personnel Relatives Association, there appear to be 54 Indian defence personnel as prisoners of war in the custody of Pakistani authorities. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which is the nodal Ministry on this issue, has been taking up this matter on several occasions with Pakistan at various levels, including that of the Prime Minister. During his visit to Pakistan on 20-21 February, 1999, Prime Minister raised this issued with the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the two sides appointed a 2-member Committee at Ministerial level to examine humanitarian issues, including that of the missing PoWs. The matter was also raised in the official level discussions held with Pakistan on March 5-6, 1999. The Pakistani side stated that there were no Indian PoWs in its custody, but agreed to re-examine the matter afresh. The Government would continue to purposefully pursue this matter with Pakistan.

Benefits to Ex-Servicemen

4732. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has given various benefits to Ex-Servicemen vide their order No. A255/62/PC/AG/P&S/ (d)/3679/D dated 24th April, 1979 pay and service branch;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) whether the said orders have been revised inview of various representations and experience gained during the last twenty years;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether it is a fact that most of the State Governments are not adhering to these instructions of his Ministry by denying professional tax exemptions to the Ex-Servicemen; and

(f) if so, what measures Government have taken or propose to take in this regard and to effectiviely monitor it progess?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (f) The Government of India letter No. A25502/PC/AG/PS/3(d)/3679/D (Pay/ Services) dated 24th July, 1979 and not of 24th April, 1979 makes reference to exemption to Armed Forces personnel from payment of taxes levied by

Municipalities/District Boards. It does not contain any directive for grant of exemption to ex-Servicemen from payment of Municipal taxes.

Attack on BSF Hqr. by Extremists

4733. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the recent storming of the BSF headquarters in Srinagar on 21st March, 2000 by the extremists once again underscores the need to tighten security arrangements;

(b) whether there is a need to make a fresh appraisal of the threats that exist against the forces based in the valley;

(c) whether Government agree that a comprehensive policy must be evolved to protect our forces and sensitive defence establishments; and

(d) if so, the steps proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Approporiate security measures have been instituted in the wake of some incidents of attacks on establishments of security forces by the terrorist.

The maintenance and improvement of security arrangements at various levels of defence establishments is an on going process. Efforts in that direction continue to be made.

Helicopters to Hit Militants in Doda District

4734. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR:
SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether helicopters armed with machine guns and rockets were pressed into operation to hit militants' hideouts in snow-clad mountains in Doda district on 24th March, 2000;

(b) if so, the results thereof in containing militancy in the area; and

(c) the measures proposed for continuous air surveillance in and J & K area to avoid massacres of the type held in Chathsingpura on 20th March, 2000?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Helicopters were used in Doda District on 25th March 2000, during a